

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1303
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 09590

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT CF FR
SUBJ: FURTHER QUAI ASSESSMENT OF CONGO

REF: PARIS 8796 (NOTAL)

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA CHRISTIAN DE LA
ROCHERE TOLD US MAR 31 THAT THE FRENCH REMAIN PERPLEXED
BY WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE CONGO WHERE TENSIONS REMAIN
HIGH. MILITARY COMMITTEE DECLARATIONS APPEAR TO HAVE
GONE BEYOND THE ORIGINAL THEME THAT
"IMPERIALISM AT BAY" WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EVENTS AND ARE
NOW SOUNDING THE NOTE THAT "THE ASSASSINS ARE AMONG US".

2. SEVERAL "CONFIDENTIAL" SOURCES INDICATE
THAT ETHNIC BATTLES ARE IMMINENT, LA ROCHERE CONTINUED,
ALTHOUGH NO ONE HAS YET DRAWN HIS REVOLVER. THERE ALSO
ARE INDICATIONS THAT KIKADIDI DID NOT KILL NGOUABI BUT
WAS FRAMED, ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT CLEAR. THE SOVIET/
CUBAN ROLE ALSO IS UNCLEAR, BUT THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT
IT WAS NOT A PRIMARY ONE AND THAT IN ANY CASE, THE
SITUATION NOW HAS GONE BEYOND THEIR CONTROL.

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3. SPECULATING ON THE MOTIVATION FOR ELIMINATING
NGOUABI, LA ROCHERE SAID THE FRENCH ARE NOT SURE THAT
HIS RECENT TURN TOWARDS THE WEST WAS RESPONSIBLE.
RATHER, THEY NOW TEND TO CONSIDER THAT THE NORTHERN
OFFICERS ACTED OUT OF FEAR OF BEING REMOVED FROM POWER
DURING THE NEXT PARTY CONGRESS.

4. ON BILATERAL RELATIONS, LA ROCHERE SAID THAT THE MILITARY COMMITTEE DOMINATED BY NORTHERNERS SO FAR HAS BROKEN NOTHING WITH FRANCE AND IS CONTINUING NGOUABI'S POLICIES. IN CONSEQUENCE, FRANCE WILL BE REPRESENTED BY A MINISTER AT THE APRIL 2 FUNERAL. THE FRENCH PLAN TO BE AS SUPPLE AS POSSIBLE AND ARE CONSIDERING GRANTING THE NEW REGIME A BUDGETARY SUBSIDY TO MEET THE END OF MARCH PAYROLL. THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, HOWEVER, HAS YET TO BE CONVINCED.

5. NEGOTIATIONS ON THE POTASSIUM AND OIL COMPANY PROBLEMS ARE GOING FORWARD. ON POTASSIUM, LA ROCHERE SAID THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT A FRENCH ENGINEER MADE A COLOSSAL BLUNDER IN ASSESSING CONGO'S POTENTIAL. HENCE, THE FRENCH ARE INCLINED TO OFFER TO HAND OVER WITHOUT INDEMNIFICATION ALL OF THE POTASSIUM INSTALLATIONS AND IN RESPONSE TO CONGOLESE DEMANDS FOR COMPENSATION, TO OFFER BUDGETARY SUPPORT. SUCH SUPPORT COULD BE REDUCED GRADUALLY TO NOTHING OVER A PERIOD OF FIVE OR SIX YEARS WHEREAS CONTINUING THE POTASSIUM OPERATION WOULD MEAN HAVING TO MEET DEFICITS PERMANENTLY.

6. THE CONGOLESE, WHILE STILL "TOUGH", ARE BEING RATHER FLEXIBLE IN THE ON-GOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH ELF, LA ROCHERE SAID. THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT THEY CAN BE PERSUADED TO REMOVE THE HEAVY NEW TAXATION THAT CAUSED ELF TO OPERATE IN THE RED, WITH ELF PAYING AN "ADVANCE", WHICH IN REALITY WOULD BE A "GIFT", BUT WHICH

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WOULD PERMIT THE OIL FIRM TO AVOID FUTURE OPERATING LOSSES IN THE CONGO. LA ROCHERE NOTED THAT THE REMARKABLY OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE OIL SITUATION MADE AT CONGOLESE REQUEST BY ALGERIAN SONATRACH ENGINEERS HAD STRENGTHENED ELF'S NEGOTIATING POSITION.

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